



## Poverty In The First Person: Understanding The Phenomenon In The City Of Beja In Portugal

Ana Isabel Lapa Fernandes<sup>1</sup>, Instituto Politécnico De Beja<sup>2</sup>

Rua Pedro Soares - Campus do Instituto Politécnico de Beja

Apartado 6155 7800-295 Beja/Portugal

*aferandes@ipbeja.pt*

**Abstract:** This article is based on an investigation that seeks to explore the subjective and existential dimension of poverty, seeking to know how it is experienced in the first person. This is a qualitative study, inductive type. The instruments used were the semi-directive interviews to inquiring caseworkers from institutions of the city of Beja, also being built in-depth interviews to understand the experiences, speeches and life trajectories of people in situations of poverty. It was concluded that the daily lives of poor people, is highly influenced by the experience of poverty. In order to experience poverty, the role of family protection reflects a causal link between the level of family cohesion and the provision of emotional and material support. Thus, the incidence, intensity and durability are important indicators in the form of experiencing poverty. This can lead to the experience of this social phenomenon becomes a way of life, where the acceptance and resignation make "being poor" as a fact gradually assimilated by those who live. Conversely people who live this situation more recently tend to not take it as identity element, for fear of social stigma, because that pushes the demand for out of poverty.

**Keywords:** Poor, Poverty, Subjectivity, Social Experience, Social Work

### INTRODUCTION

The study object of this research focuses on the subjective dimension of poverty as part of human existence. We looked at the analysis of the meaning of being poor, representations and beliefs about poverty. It was also performed a reflection on poverty and social inequality today, based on the binomial needs / human rights, as key to fighting poverty.

Thus, it is argued that the experience of poverty becomes a fundamental object of study for understanding this phenomenon. It is an important angle of analysis, since there is no consensus that all people "feel or live" poverty in the same way.

Experiencing poverty influences the life of those who experience it, making it essential to their understanding, as an expression of social problems and needs, and how to boost the demand for social intervention strategies. The knowledge produced by this study is fundamental, demonstrating the need for sensitivity who understands differences in the way of living poverty, giving it a contribution to the humanization of social responses.

### POVERTY AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON: THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBJECTIVITY

The proclamation of human rights is an important achievement of mankind, which finds a close relationship with poverty, more than in the first instance, because the poor see restricted a set of rights. In this light, the loss of basic rights hinders access to other rights. This fact is remembered on the paragraph 1 of Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, strongly countered before the occurrence of poverty

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate to ensure you and your health family and well - being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. “

It is therefore to identify poverty with violation of basic conditions, related to what is more important for humans, with the acquisition of goods and services and the promotion of fundamental rights. (cf. Pereira, 2002). One of the faces of poverty is its relationship to social inequality, incident phenomenon worldwide and associated with the unequal distribution of the fruits of progress. (cf. Alves, 2011).

This seems to be one of the expressions that best reflect the relationship between poverty, social inequality and human rights violations, associated with the dissatisfaction of basic human needs. Consider the argument that an increase in household income would have effects in reducing the poverty, cannot divert the focus of the elimination of the structural roots of the problem, this is, the output for the eradication of this phenomenon.

The reality of unequal Portugal (cf. Carmo, 2010), produces significant effects in people whose heterogeneity paths and life situations requires a reflection on the strategies to combat poverty, as

“... On the one hand it is necessary to enable social inclusion strategies appropriate to the different profile of the beneficiaries, because the factors of immobilization and their combination vary greatly from individual to individual; on the other, this policy should focus on the factors that shape the conditions of poverty, social exclusion and immobilization ... going beyond a merely welfare logic.  
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Thus, when analyzing poverty in its subjective dimension, you can relate it to the proliferation of inequalities in human capital accumulation, based on unequal opportunities and conditions for participation in the labor market and (re) distribution of income. Given this assumption, the

“... fact that money be used as a poverty measurement indicator limits the degree of accuracy in the measurement of this phenomenon ... the level of state intervention ... makes appear for the same income different «situations of deprivation».”(INE, 2010, p. 25).

When considering the existential dimension of poverty, human needs must have a recognized universal value. They are exactly the inequalities in access to means of meeting these needs, which are the basis of social inequalities. What distinguishes the basic needs, of all others, is the fact that only they be given a particular implication, that is, the occurrence of serious losses in the material life of the people and their role as informed and critical subject, if these needs are not adequately satisfied. (cf. Pereira, 2002).

Poverty, traditionally related materials and objective dimensions, also associates itself to a subjective profile that includes an absence of freedom, development and implementation, affecting the human being as a whole. (cf. Bruto da Costa et al, 2008). Overshadow these dimensions, carries the risk of being ignored relevant aspects of the problem.

It should be noted that the consequences of poverty at the existential level, may be associated with a type of persistent poverty, which includes not only the monetary dimension, but also the concept of deprivation “... that is, the measure of access to basic goods and services.”

Most analyzes on poverty, essentially depart from agreed criteria, which leave uncovered more subjective dimensions, nor can this phenomenon be reduced to

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“... A purely financial reality. The lack of income leads to a situation where basic needs cannot be met, which in turn creates an existential situation that affects the most diverse and profound aspects of life and human personality. “(Bruto da Costa et al, 2008, p. 30).

Poverty translates a human and social experience, as it is a phenomenon that the human being experiences in society, not submitting to logical and purely rational behavior. Although these behaviors are not necessarily unstable, the human history of the poverty experience can be considered as a combination of various logics of action, and

“The social experience is formed in the case in which the classical representation of «society» no longer it is adequate in the case in which the players are required to simultaneously handle several logical action, which refer to different logical social system ... “(Dubet, 1994, p. 94).

The sense that poor people give to their situation, can in part be built through a process of social disqualification, produced by “tagging” attributed to poor status, leading to refusal of positions, internalization or negotiation of such status. (cf. Paugam, 2003). On the other hand, being poor can relate to socio elements - historical and cultural lining poverty in a symbolic dimension, a member of the (re) construction of the identity of those who live it, assuming as the fine line between being integrated or be deleted. (cf. Capucha, 2005).

Capture other meanings of poverty implies considering dimensions of analysis on the incidence, intensity and severity. (cf. Farinha in INE, 2010). It is therefore necessary to consider the vulnerability factors that expose certain individuals to poverty and understand the reasons that led some to overcome their poverty, while others do not have the necessary means to do so.

### **HISTORY AND NOTES ABOUT THE ALENTEJO REGION AND THE CITY OF BEJA - PORTUGAL**

To understand the Alentejo Region at the present and more specifically the city of Beja, is important to consider the representation and image built about it, because

“In fact, although they have built an image of the region as an essentially rural area and agriculture, we find that the Alentejo has suffered from the years 60/70 a number of mutations ... contradictory the processes affect the structure and composition of contemporary social reality of Alentejo. (Carmo, 2007 a, p. 28).

As such, the use of history is presented as a key element for understanding and study the light of a historical trajectory that elucidates on the major social, cultural, political and economic aspects of Alentejo.

The predominant form of social stratification in Alentejo over the ownership of property and form of social organization of labor in the fields, delimits the analysis of social inequality, which increased proportionally according to ownership and land area decreased. It is therefore important to know the different set of class positions, and

“... The positions that can be characterized in a relatively linear way are the higher classes, namely the landowners and large and medium farmers... The difference between the first and the other categories has to do primarily with the status before the forms of agricultural exploitation ... The non-leased plots were not normally run by themselves, delegating this function in the taskmaster who held an almost absolute authority with other workers . One of the features that distinguished this other class of was that not exercise any manual labor “(Carmo b) 2007, p. 820).

However, ownership and land management work was not the only activity of the large landowners, since another of the characteristics of this group of people was the fact that they are linked to the performance of

other activities, and therefore enjoyed by other income sources related to socially recognized professions.

The poorest classes lived in a more way because of the lack of access to land ownership; there were permanent workers and temporary workers, the latter being more numerous than the first.

Alms were part of the social relations between rich and poor in Alentejo, mitigating any social unrest. The social control exercised over the poor, was exercised sometimes in an organized manner, "Charity expressed in alms mainly had a local and private nature: was a loan to God..., moreover, contributed simultaneously to remove the danger of social unrest. It was also a mean of ensuring prestige and status". (Cutileiro, 1977, p. 93).

Historically Alentejo is associated with a depressed territory, depopulated and aged,

"For this relatively static view of the Alentejo contributed greatly the ability of persistence Laird system, whose structures have remained, stabilized until the mid-70s of the twentieth century. However, from the 50s developed a set of structural processes that significantly altered the social and demographic composition of rural society. In addition to the migratory flows that intensified at that stage, there was the widespread impact of agriculture mechanization, whose immediate consequence was the drastic reduction in agricultural activity; saw the intensification of urbanization reaches the major cities and towns; unfolded the problematic land reform path that led to the dismissal of the traditional system in the second half of the '70s". (Carmo b), 2007, p. 31).

Carmo (2007, b) conduct an interesting systematization of data on the Alentejo Region, which adds the current picture of this territory a historical perspective, providing important analytical contributions.

From a demographic point of view it is held two distinct phases, buoyed between the late nineteenth century and the late twentieth century. If by 1950 this region saw its population increase by 121% (from 359,088 to 792,505 inhabitants) from 1950 gets a population decline phase, especially a loss of 33% from 1960 to 2001. In 2006, the number of population of the region Alentejo are equivalent to those achieved in the first ten years of the twentieth century (530,866 inhabitants). (cf. Carmo b), 2007). So"... the degree of mechanization grows considerably between the 50 and 60 ... which represents a profound change from the traditional modes of production." (Carmo b), 2007, p. 828).

With regard to large cities, and more specifically Beja and Évora, stands out from other cities of Alto Alentejo (Portalegre and Elvas), because "From the 50s gives a population growth that reverses the general trend of population decline in the region: between 1940 and 2001, the cities of Évora and Beja grow 70% and 66% respectively" (Carmo b), 2007, p. 34).

The author also draws attention to the fact that the urban centers of growth component, have been neglected in many studies, to join the Alentejo to a rurality dimension, hidden coexistence between population increase in cities and emptying of rural areas and miss important dimensions of analysis for the understanding of social phenomena.

Traditionally connoted as a peripheral space, the interior seems to emerge as a counterpoint on the related urbanization, as 2. Disponível em <http://observatorio.das.desigualdades.cies.iscte.pt>

rule, with the coastal regions. However, from the 90s of last century, it was widespread urbanization in much of the Alentejo county seats, including leading the growth of some tend to agricultural parishes - would constitute the phenomenon of suburbanisation. (cf. Carmo b), 2007).

In this reflection it is important to highlight the relationship between the harsh working conditions, rises the weight of an equally harsh climate and inequitable forms of income distribution, where those who work more normally were those who least earned. Hunger seemed to remain hidden proudly because people, despite working, could not escape persistent poverty.

"Today, without these spatial coordinates - time without this ancient relationship with the land and with the rhythms of nature, under the weight of modernity that dislodges from its understanding of the world, ...when yesterday was praised for its vertical honor to see bent under the weight of a man without salary soften hunger ... not confess hunger, hides it, knowing that everyone knows and almost all are hungry, even when working. This is the ancestral honor closely related to the work, so often isolated, in the field..."(Orta, 2000, p. 19).

Among the poor there were like two "classes": "... Converted almsgiving an important social institution" traditional beggars and those who appear before the condition of unemployed, saw themselves "forced" to accept alms, these being that (Cutileiro, 1977, p. 1994).

Thus the studies on the region, particularly from the 60s of the twentieth century, characterized it as a distinctly rural and deeply inequitable. Cutileiro (1977) exemplifies how the poor were blamed, as regards the challenge to a law of 1931, which sought to fine those who do not look for their watchdogs, under the aegis of the following argument: "... Dogs do not only protect the wildlife herds, but also constitute a deterrent to those who, thinking it may be justified by the lack of work and the economic crisis, feel with the right to throw hand to what others have produced ". (Cutileiro, 1977, p. 96).

The point of view of the working poor was quite different, considered as a way to restore some measure of justice in a society where the distribution of wealth was as unequal as that

"... The theft of small amounts of firewood, fruit, acorn ... is considered almost as a right when those who practice lived in extreme poverty, especially if they are unemployed ... the rich, who did not what had been taken away from the poor, should not complain, they were hungry and cold and what they had stolen would have probably been rotting in fields.... In the eyes of the poor, inequalities ... justify this type of theft "(Cutileiro, 1977, p. 96-97).

The evolution of the contours of this situation, for today, considering that historically "The social asymmetry of the region was manifested and mirrored each other, either in the way they developed the relations of production that were clearly of exploitation, whether in the form as if living the daily life in the villages where reigned oppression." (Carmo, 2000, p. 25).

From this point of view, characterize social inequalities in Alentejo, implies consider two axes of analysis: the size of the property and the organization of work, clarifying that

"... The first highlights the level which is established between the large and the average property, which occupy larger area, and the small and tiny property, which are much higher in number. The second identifies two distinct forms of organization and status in employment, characterized on the one hand by holding their own, which develops from the lease arrangements and / or partnership, and on the other hand, the agricultural wage labor by behalf of others "(Carmo b), 2007, p. 820).

The Revolution of April 25, 1974, came to shake this world and this form of social organization. The echoes of what was to come appeared and

"In March 1975, before the enactment of the law of agrarian reform and also before any land occupations ... people already knew they were eminent major changes and the notion they had of their relative positions had been deeply disturbed. The landlords still had the land but suspected, rightly, that would very soon cease to be his; the supposed workers that their time had come and they would become the new owners "(Cutileiro 1977, p. 406).

The end of the dictatorship was received by the most oppressed people of Alentejo, as a sign of liberation and as an opportunity to improve living conditions; it is indeed elucidated by Cutileiro:

“... The habits are changed and the post-status workers are freed from the burden of old servitudes. It will take things too badly run to be nostalgia for the past. When speculating about the risks and shortcomings of the current situation, the workers imagine a return to this past (a return to the landlords) the hypothesis is certainly the least enjoyable...and considered as early resignation rather than hope. This is moreover one of the aspects that separate the Alentejo other rural regions of Portugal: while some of these reference to the status quo ... provides a model of...society to present and viable, in principle, as an alternative, in the Alentejo the status quo ... it is, for the vast majority of the population, undesirable “(Cutileiro 1977, p. 414).

Reporting analysis for today is necessary to mention the changes in the structure and form of occupation of space, considering the urban space has increased and the rural areas that lost population and isolated, and the narrowing of the borders between the field and the city.

A critical and watch attitude towards homogenization temptation of spaces and cultures is necessary because, although with common cultural traits and even geographically identifiable, it is not composed only of these dimensions.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This research aimed to study the form and meaning that people attribute to a particular social phenomenon - in this case the experience of poverty in the first person. This research appears in methodological terms, framed in a constructivist paradigm. It is understood that the realities are built in specific locations and contexts, so in epistemological terms, the way to attain knowledge suggests that this is made subjectively, considering the knowledge that is being generated and discovered. (cf. Denzin and Lincoln, 2006).

The qualitative aspect of this research, reliability of part of the authenticity of testimonies that were collected, which are not intended to contribute to the construction of plausible explanations to be widespread, but that allow building an analysis of a real concrete situation, since “... The qualitative analysis usually study an individual situation, a few individuals reduced situations. Even if it is marginal, the qualitative analysis aims to deepen this aspect...” (Olabuénaga, 1999, p. 63).

When you opt for an inductive type of research, is not a goal achieving a comprehensive explanation of the problem, but rather to understand the reality under study, from a concrete real situation.

Thus, the design of research and the methodological approach had underlying the starting question: “How do people accompanied by social welfare institutions, with intervention in the city of Beja, experience their poverty?”.

They were formulated as general objective to understand how they are experienced the poverty in the first person, understanding the pathways of life of poor people, as key elements for recognition of the social experience of subjects. Against this background, this research work was organized based on a line of thought that intended to give overall coherence, and at the same time, achieve the objectives, which can be synthesized as follows:

## **Research and bibliographic and documentary analysis**

of reference authors to the phenomenon of poverty, using books, articles, journals, legislation and information in electronic form (via Internet), allowing frame this research around the main axes of analysis emanating from the question of departure. The collected material was then subjected to a content analysis, organizing the information around the poverty reflection as a social phenomenon, about the meaning of being poor, as well as about the institutional mechanisms of response to poverty also being explored territoriality of poverty, looking the phenomenon in the Alentejo region and more specifically in the city of Beja;



### **In addition to this were implemented and analyzed exploratory interviews**

to the local leaders responsible for institutions considered living forces of the environment, on the problem under study, such as the Mayor of Beja, the Director of the District Centre of Social Security, the President of the Diocesan Caritas and the Bishop of Beja. These interviews were relevant to provide research clues, in general, and to contribute to the definition of the object of study, due to the fact that this interview "... has interest when starting a ground search and if you want to discover the lines relevant force, given the ignorance of the studied phenomenon "(Guerra, 2006, p. 33).

### **The Empirical Work it was Organized in Two Pillars**

#### *First Pillar: The Phenomenon of Poverty Seen locally*

1. Characterization of social responses to poverty at the local level, through understanding and analysis of the main equipment, services and social responses by area of intervention: children and youth; adult population; family and community; closed groups / specific responses.
2. Analysis of key demographic, social, cultural and economic indicators relating to the Alentejo region and focusing the analysis, wherever possible, in the city of Beja, according to the available data.
3. Interviews semi directives to social workers who work in social institutions in the city of Beja, who intervened on poverty.

This type of interview, configured as the most appropriate to the understanding of the work done by the professionals of Social Work, to the phenomenon of poverty at the local level, as presupposed the existence of certain issues in a script, giving the researcher sufficient freedom and flexibility to add or change the course of the same interview in the course of the function.

#### *Second Pillar: Poverty Visions in the First Person*

### **Study and understanding experiences, speeches and life trajectories of poor people**

To this end, it was determined as an analytical field people accompanied by social support institutions in the city of Beja, who experience a situation of poverty, and the unit of analysis consists of twelve people selected through a purposive sample for convenience of the researcher. The random selection of respondents could bring difficulties in implementation and so we used two convenience criteria:

- a) The ease of access to institutions, due to teaching and supervision in social work internships conducted by the researcher.
- b) The willingness of the people in poverty to collaborate on research. This procedure it was mediated with the help of social workers of the two selected institutions which, at the request of investigator, indicated people who experienced poverty. The contact was later established between the researcher and the possible respondents, of which twelve have acceded to give their contribution to this work.

Aiming internal coherence of research, as well as its objectives, it was used as a method of gathering information the in-depth interviews. Then the information in the analysis stage was based on the material collected by recording the interviews, which was subjected to a categorical content analysis that allowed "... text dismemberment operations units in categories according analog regroupings". (Bardin, 1977, p. 153).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Relationship with Social Support Institutions

Poverty in the city of Beja is locally represented by two distinct universes: a) the universe of people who experience a situation of poverty, but maintain a link with the world of work (four respondents) and b) the universe of people living in poverty with no degree of connection with the world of work (eight respondents).

Alongside these two universes, were also identified three types of relationship with social support institutions in the city of Beja:

- a) The relationship in which there is access to social support with under-performing status, by people who are framed in measures and programs to combat poverty, of which we highlight the Social Insertion Income, the Unemployment Benefit, Social Subsidy Unemployment or food and financial support from institutions;
- b) The relationship that was broken access to social support, which however ceased or was dismissed, but under which people keep the under-performing status, by the provision of social workers who collaborated in this study, which continue to monitor these situations in social institutions;
- c) The relationship through which people want the under-performing status, awaiting decision of integration requests for measures or programs to combat poverty.

### Profile and Important Moments in the Lives of Poor People

In general these persons are unemployed, a fact that may be associated with a lower educational profile, which we point out that there are two people interviewed who claim only be able to sign his name and another one that witness never attended school.

Professional trajectories were somehow compromised, is small the number of respondents who are integrated in the labor market. The people who are working do it in areas such as hygiene and cleanliness, gardening and intercultural mediation. The household of the people interviewed is composed mostly of three to seven people, having noticed that eight respondents have three or more children.

With regard to individual pathways of the twelve people interviewed stand out episodes of domestic violence, situations of illness or death of close relatives, emotional disruptions with companions (as) or spouses, materialized sometimes violently, and almost accompanied by a breakdown of financial resources. Was also reported early withdrawal from the school system, given the financial difficulties of the parents, or situations of debt, job loss or occurrence of an unplanned pregnancy. In a polar opposite, the majority of respondents when asked about the happiest moments of their lives do not hesitate, in the case of those with children, to associate the birth of their offspring as the most rewarding moments of his existential journey.

### The Daily

The way these people experience daily life, seems to take a link with the experience of poverty. The fact that they are unemployed or retired, and so on untying on the labor market, leads to these people generally perform tasks related to the domestic universe, manifesting an everyday almost exclusively confined to the home. People who experience poverty, who do not confine their daily only to the domestic space, have a routine that incorporates movement to social institutions, along with tasks such as taking children to school, and in cases with lower expression, sightseeing or go to the coffee shop.

The social networks translate into interpersonal relationships very focused on family, referred as the central focus of sharing the daily life, confined to a small group of members, who generally share the same household. The ratio of poor people with family and other social networks, shows that respondents in general, manifest



maintain close relationships with members of their household. Yet it remains to be significant that five respondents confess being away from family, motivated by the loss of loved ones or marital separations.

Respondents who maintain close relationships with family do activities confined mainly to housing. There are also mentioned activities such as eating or drinking, talking or go to the coffee shop, reinforcing the importance to respondents of this type of family-based sociability.

The places where they go were centered in the city of Beja, a fact that can be related to insufficient financial resources and consequently the experience of poverty. Half of this group of people hopes to pursue a professional activity, as a key vehicle to get out of poverty. It is in this context that the desire to break living in poverty, transform the act of working as something important in their lives.

### **The Relationship with the Social Institutions**

the Social Insertion Income Program is the more relevant in the social support received by respondents, accumulated in some situations, with Program of Food Supply or attend the Social Canteen.

The Unemployment Benefit and Unemployment Assistance also take some notoriety, in all the received social support, taking the mission to compensate the loss of income. Most respondents mentioned as a reason for resorting to social institutions the lack of financial resources, reason directly related to the non-satisfaction of basic human needs such as food or clothing.

The analysis also include reasons based on the experience of situations or critical incidents in their lives, as the occurrence of a pregnancy, be affected by a disease or have a child in this situation, experience a debt situation after the acquisition of a property, being a victim of domestic violence, live an emotional breakdown situation, have become detached from the labor market, have left school early or never attended the school system.

It was found that the majority of respondents took the initiative to resort to institutions, followed by the initiative of spouse. Note also the existence of two situations where social supports it is extended for nine and eleven years, respectively. The majority of respondents considered that it lived up their expectations, feeling heard or welcomed face in their request. However, only three people rated their situation as resolved. The remaining respondents put emphasis on the (re) entering in the world of work, as the only condition to reverse their situation; others call attention to the ephemeral nature of social benefits, which in their opinion does not lead to structural changes in their lives. Was also highlighted the fact social that institutions did not help to solve the lack of financial resources

Half of these respondents said that they feel satisfied with the use of social support institutions, rating favorably dimensions as the service, food and the fact that they felt they were heard. In another pole, other respondents said they feel dissatisfied with the quality of food, the length of the waiting time and have the feeling that they were not treated equally.

### **Break away from Poverty**

The job search is the way that these people consider most appropriate to fight poverty. However, there are many difficulties in the constant search and almost no answers.

For those people who still have some kind of employment status, albeit precarious, maintaining employment is a vital issue to get out of poverty, although they want better living conditions.

However, when asked about their particular situation, not all see themselves as poor, though they assume have no financial resources. They claim to have health and are lucky enough to have children. They consider themselves poor only in a relative way, because they depend on the help of others.

For those who assume themselves as poor, most bases its claim on the lack of financial resources to survive independently, depending on social support. They also said they had no adequate housing, no health treatment and they said they felt lonely because some relatives have died

The idea of an equitable distribution of resources by the poor, the access and maintenance of jobs, the decrease in the living expenses and the increased of purchasing power, seem to be the fundamental conditions for a better balance between “rich” and “poor”, desired by respondents.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

Overall, the way people live their poverty is influenced by a low educational profile. Visions of poverty in the first person are thus marked by experiences and various critical incidents. This succession of critical incidents, in the lives of the respondents, seems to cross the story of poverty, because in one way or another this list of events always empties into account situations of lack of basic human needs satisfaction. Thus, if the experience of poverty, appears as one of the central critical episodes in the lives of these people, the moments of happiness arise often related to family experiences, especially the birth of children. The daily life of the poor is highly influenced by the experience of poverty, and more specifically by untying for a job. The family seems to play a key role in the lives of the respondents, having much meaning the loss of loved ones or marital separations. The closeness of ties with family reflects a causal link between the level of family cohesion and the provision of emotional and material support towards poverty. It is also the family the focus of everyday social relations, which adjoin the contacts to members who share the same household. The act of “work,” or “having a job”, is one of their desires, that continually express the intention to stop being poor. The relationship maintained with the institutions of social support, is also a central focus in the lives of people in poverty. This is not always a peaceful relationship because they generally do not consider their situation solved, given the ephemeral character of the support, which does not lead to changes in their lives. From this point of view, social institutions are not seen as a resource to stop being poor.

Thus the way of experiencing poverty can lead to ways of life, in which the acceptance and resignation, make “being poor” as a fact and a reality gradually assimilated by those who live it. In opposite, people who experience this situation more recently tend not to take poverty as an identity element, experiencing feelings of fear of social stigma, that sometimes push the search for a genuine process of social inclusion.

These conclusions maybe generalizable cross- nationally because these study, despite its local character, provides important clues for social intervention in poverty. It enables to note the importance of understanding the feelings of those who are poor in any context, since the subjective dimension of poverty should be included in the strategies to deal with poverty, whatever the situation or location.

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